

Factory Farms UNMASKED



- **Locations:** Winterset, Stuart, Guthrie Center, and Thompson, Iowa
- **Exposed:** Second and third largest egg producers in the U.S.

"I've seen some terrible things in my undercover experience, but nothing even begins to compare to these battery cage facilities," says the HSUS investigator of the 25 days he worked for Rose Acre Farms and Rembrandt Enterprises. At four facilities, he documented the cruelty typical of factory-style caging systems. Countless animals suffered painful injuries and illnesses; many became trapped in cage wire and slowly perished. Survivors didn't fare much better. After months of battery cage life, they were rendered "hollow shells" of birds, he says—scrawny, featherless, defeated creatures ground up for chicken byproducts or slaughtered for low-grade meat.

Nearly 270 million chickens—more than 90 percent of egg-laying hens—in the U.S. are confined so tightly in barren cages that they can't even spread their wings. Working with family farmers and other stakeholders, The HSUS is raising awareness and prompting many producers to shift to cage-free systems. Our investigators are the public's eyes and ears into the conditions at the facilities of producers resistant to change, says senior director of investigations Mary Beth Sweetland. "They bring the suffering out in the open."

Says the investigator of the Iowa facilities, who spent weeks removing decomposing corpses from cages: "This isn't in sync with how the public wants to get their eggs."

- **Location:** Willmar, Minnesota
- **Exposed:** Largest turkey hatchery in the U.S.

Days before Thanksgiving, an HSUS investigation revealed the unappetizing reality behind industrially produced turkey products. Working at the Willmar Poultry Company, an investigator videotaped conveyor belts drenched in the blood of young turkeys whose toes, snoods, and beaks were cut off with no anesthetic. Sick and injured hatchlings fell from conveyor belts and flapped helplessly for hours on the factory floor—until the end of the day, when they and any surplus birds were tossed into a machine that ground them up alive.

It was The HSUS's first undercover exposé of the U.S. commercial turkey industry, which produces more than 250 million birds each year. Willmar and one of its customers defended the abuses as standard industry practices. Sadly, they're correct: Federal animal welfare laws don't apply to animals on the farm, enabling businesses to treat birds as mere production units.

The HSUS is urging the industry to adopt higher standards, including more humane slaughter methods, and enlisting public support for reforms. "Investigations like this are shining a bright light on this very dark world of factory farming," says The HSUS's Paul Shapiro. "The more Americans learn about the routine abuses, the greater the demand for change."

“It makes me angry for people who buy these products in the grocery stores, where everything is bright and clean. The barns are not bright. They're not clean. It's not at all what it seems.”

—An HSUS undercover investigator who spent a month at a Cal-Maine Foods facility in Texas, where four “house-keepers” were expected to care for 240,000 animals each

- **Location:** Waverly, Virginia
- **Exposed:** Industrial pig breeding facility owned by the world's largest pork producer

At a massive pig breeding farm owned by a Smithfield Foods subsidiary, an HSUS undercover investigator documented the miserable lives of breeding sows virtually immobilized in gestation crates. Open pressure sores and untreated abscesses were common. Some animals showed compulsive swaying and head-bobbing; others chewed the cage bars until their mouths bled. Outside the crates, the animals were treated roughly—struck with iron rods or even thrown into a dumpster to die.

The widely publicized video footage hit a public nerve, adding pressure on Smithfield and other pork producers to end the use of gestation crates. “If you're not already anti-factory-farming, this will do it,” wrote *New York Times Magazine* columnist Mark Bittman in his blog. “... The video leaves me pretty much speechless.” *Grist* food and agriculture columnist Tom Philpott had a similar reaction, concluding: “Thank goodness we have the Humane Society acting as our eyes on the meat-factory floor.”



- **Location:** Waelder, Texas
- **Exposed:** Largest egg producer in the U.S.

At Cal-Maine Foods' million-chicken egg operation, two details were inescapable: animal suffering and filth. The fly infestation in one barn was so severe, says the HSUS undercover investigator who worked there in November, it was like “walking on Rice Krispies.” Hens and eggs were covered in chicken waste that rained down from the cages above.

The exposé occurred in the wake of the nation's largest egg recall, in which a half-billion eggs from battery cage facilities were deemed at risk for salmonella contamination. The HSUS ran ads reminding the public and policymakers that intensive confinement systems aren't just cruel—they're also a health danger. Citing numerous recent studies that show a clear link between battery cage confinement and salmonella contamination, The HSUS filed a complaint with the FDA about the Cal-Maine findings, asking the agency to amend the federal egg safety rule. Says The HSUS's Dr. Michael Greger: “This is the science that the FDA cannot afford to ignore.”